

✓CF Censorship RP 3/6/89

Local people to take part in readings of 'Satanic Verses'

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About 25 local writers, politicians and personalities will gather Wednesday night for a radio reading from the controversial book "The Satanic Verses."

The reading will be broadcast from the UC-Santa Cruz station, KZSC (88.1 FM), on John Sandidge's call-in radio show, "Talk About," from 7:15 to 8:45 p.m.

Sandidge said the program has been easy to organize because participants are anxious to stand up against the terrorist tactics being used to silence the author of the book.

Author Salman Rushdie has been in hiding in England since last month when the Ayatollah Khomeini ordered Rushdie slain on grounds the writer, who was born a Muslim, had blasphemed the faith.

One participant in Wednesday's broadcast will be Watsonville City Councilman Dennis Osmer. He said that before agreeing to participate he pondered whether his reading from the book would be disrespectful to someone's religious beliefs. Osmer said he respects differ-

ent religions, but in this case the defense of free-speech rights comes first.

"We have to support the First Amendment where we can, because it can slip away easily," Osmer said.

Sandidge and some participants admit they are a "little nervous" about the reading. Sandidge said he will read a disclaimer at the start of the show warning people of the controversial topic.

"I always announce that the topic is not meant to offend anyone and invite people to turn off the show if they don't like what's being said," Sandidge said.

The most difficult part of organizing the show was getting a copy of the book, which has been sold out across the country. A friend finally loaned Sandidge a copy, parts of which he will copy for the reading.

"We are going to start on page one and read as far as we can get in an hour-and-a-half," said Sandidge. "It doesn't make much of a difference what we read — the point is to stand up for free speech."

Among those set to participate are Fred Keeley, the San

Lorenzo Valley representative on the county Board of Supervisors; film-makers Mark Schwartz and Geoffery Dunn; Stephen Kessler, editor of The Sun, and Register-Pajaronian reporter Guy Lasnier.

Group gatherings such as this have happened at several spots around the country in recent weeks.

Chris Matthews, former county supervisor for the Pajaro Valley and a writer, said he welcomed the chance to read because he has been upset about the issue ever since bookstore chains pulled the books from their shelves.

"I'm not a fan of Rushdie, but what's happening to him is fascism," Matthews said. "We can't let the Ayatollah be the censor of the world."

Dick Little, news director at KTOM radio and another participant in the Wednesday reading, said he is reading because he's mad about the terrorist threats.

"You can't allow yourself to be intimidated by something like this. If you do, what's next? No one should be afraid of free thought and its expression whether they agree with it or not," Little said.